

a daily basis. Yesterday, 170 Iraqis were killed that we know of, 4 Americans. I haven't received the reports this morning on what happened last night. We also mourn for people like these gallant individuals, who were there trying to make the world a better place. Our thoughts go out to the families of these four individuals. Later today, their names will be spread across the RECORD of the U.S. Senate.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Madam President, on the Democratic side, we have six 10-minute speeches. I ask unanimous consent that each Democratic Senator have their full time and, of course, the Republicans would have their full 60 minutes when we complete ours.

Now I ask unanimous consent that Senator SALAZAR be recognized, followed by Senator GREGG, if he is here, Senator CONRAD, Senator BENNETT, Senator DURBIN, and me, in that order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second hour under the control of the Republican leader or his designee.

The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

OUR WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, just days before the start of the 110th Congress, I had the great honor of traveling to Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador in South America with our majority leader, HARRY REID, as well as four of my other colleagues: Senator JUDD GREGG from New Hampshire, Senator BOB BENNETT from Utah, Senator KENT CONRAD from North Dakota, and Senator DICK DURBIN of Illinois. It was a great and wonderful trip for me for a number of reasons.

First, my own view is that over the last decade, and perhaps even more, this country has not paid enough attention to our relationship with Latin America and South America. For me, there is a special bond and relationship because of my own history in the Southwest of the United States. My family founded the city of Santa Fe, NM, now 409 years or four centuries ago. So before Plymouth Rock was

founded or Jamestown was founded, my family was already living in what is now the northern part of the State of New Mexico.

The place I come from still bears the same names that were put on those places by the Spaniards who settled northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. There is our ranch in the San Luis Valley. When you look around to the mountains to the east, those mountain ranges are called the Sangre de Cristo Mountains or the Blood of Christ range. The mountain ranges in the west at 14,000 feet are named after John the Baptist, the San Juan Mountains, and the river that runs through our ranch is called the Rio San Antonio, the Saint Anthony River. That history has always created a very special bond with our neighbors to the south in Mexico and Central America and Latin America.

When Senator REID and the delegation of six Senators went to South America, it was important for me because what we were doing as a collective group was making a strong statement to Latin America that they are our friends and that we will be working closely with Latin America to make sure that the bond and the relationship between the United States of America and those countries to the south is a bond that is strong and one that will continue.

I also was very pleased with the fact that it was a bipartisan delegation. As we met in those countries with the Presidents of Bolivia and Ecuador, it was important that we were one voice, telling the leaders of those countries that we would find ways in which we would strengthen the relationship between the United States and those countries. That signalled a friendship and mutual interest on the part of the U.S. Government to those countries, and it was very important.

I believe we need to recommit ourselves to strengthening our relationships with Latin America. I also believe our failure to do so will imperil the U.S. strategic interests in fighting terrorism, combating drugs, and helping democratic governments throughout Latin America.

Over 45 years ago, there was another Senator taking on a new role in our Nation's history in this city, and at that time he reached out to Latin America with a program that he called the Alliance for Progress. On March 13, 1961, as the Cold War was beginning to mushroom, President John Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress—known in Spanish throughout Latin America as la Alianza del Progreso—with a vision to create a strong and united Western Hemisphere of nations. On that momentous day, President Kennedy spoke with remarkable clarity about our country's connection with Latin America. He said:

We meet together as firm and ancient friends, united by history and experience and by our determination to advance the values of American civilization. This world of ours

is not merely an accident of geography. Our continents are bound together by a common history. And our people share a common heritage—the quest for the dignity and the freedom of man.

The effort of the Alliance for Progress was not as successful as President Kennedy wished. Indeed, over the next half century, we witnessed political upheaval in many of the Latin American countries, and we saw strained relationships between the United States and some of these nations. But the Alliance for Progress did work to establish good will among the people of the Americas, and we can learn from its shortcomings as we continue to move forward.

As we enter 2007, I hope our six Senators have begun to shine a spotlight on our strategic alliance with Latin America. Under that spotlight, you will find the difficult and complex issues of international trade, immigration, and the battles we wage together against the awful scourge of drugs which affects the populations of those countries as well as ours. We also face the challenge of increasing economic opportunity and eliminating poverty in that part of the world.

Our first stop in South America was in Bolivia, which is one of the poorest countries in this hemisphere, with one of the largest indigenous populations in Latin America. We met with Bolivia's President, Evo Morales, who was sworn in in 2006 as the country's first indigenous President in its history. We spoke with President Morales about his concerns relating to coca production and our concerns about coca production in Bolivia. We also spoke to him about the interest of Bolivia in extending the Andean trade preferences agreement. I believe it was a productive dialog, but we must continue the dialog if we are to build a stronger relationship with the country of Bolivia and keep Bolivia from going down a path which ultimately will end up in opposition to the interests of the United States.

We also there met with the U.S. Agency for International Development and learned about the scope and impact of their projects in Bolivia. USAID is working to create economic opportunities and alleviate poverty, which is so important to improving the lives of the Bolivian population.

In Ecuador, we met with President Correa, who was busy preparing for his January 15 inauguration. He took time to meet with us, assembling his Cabinet and talking about the importance of the relationship between Ecuador and the United States. President Correa pledged to shut down the drug trafficking that is occurring in and around Ecuador and also raised the need to extend the Andean trade preferences program.

When we visited the LatinFlor flower farm, we saw firsthand the impact of this trade program. It is creating thousands upon thousands of jobs for the people of Ecuador and keeping people